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KU's collection of Irish literature features more than 25,000 items

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One of most extensive collections of Irish literature held outside of Ireland resides in the special collections department at the University of Kansas Spencer Research Library.

Highlights include:

James Joyce — With more than 900 items, KU's James Joyce collection is unusually complete in books and periodicals, including all first editions of Joyce's works except five minor items printed for copyright purposes. It contains nearly all the books and pamphlets devoted to the author and his works and more than 200 books and periodicals containing critical and biographical material. Particularly uncommon are copies of the two broadsides, "The Holy Office" (1904 or 1905) and "Gas from a Burner" (1912), the latter bearing in holograph the author's story of the destruction of the first (Dublin) edition of "Dubliners." Also present is a copy of the first edition of "Ulysses" in French, signed by Stuart Gilbert, who oversaw the translation, and inscribed by Joyce to his daughter Lucia on the date of issue; this copy has the novelty of bearing the strange post-mortem bookplate of the author. There is also a copy of the elusive "Pomes Penyeach" (Cleveland, 1931).

William Butler Yeats — The William Butler Yeats collection is a remarkably rich one: all of Yeats' works in first edition except the scarce "Mosada" (1886) and "The Hour-Glass" (1903), with many later and variant editions and printings; books edited or containing contributions by Yeats; several score of books from his personal library (including copies of his own works with his annotations) and even the published "Debates of the Irish Parliament" in which Yeats was a senator from the beginning.

KU's additional acquisition of 25,000 items of Irish literature in 1959 immeasurably strengthened resources in Anglo-Irish literature and history, giving rise to new interests and new courses across campus.

Irish history, from the 17th century to the revolutionary movements of the 20th century, is extraordinarily well-represented through newspapers, propaganda pamphlets, broadsheets, local history publications, songs and scholarly works.

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